

Each year, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) reports on the status of public transportation in Washington State. The annual report provides uniform data to transit providers, the Legislative Transportation committees, and local and regional governments.<sup>1</sup>

Today, there are 28 local governmental public transportation systems in Washington State—20 of which are public transportation benefit areas. This introduction includes a statewide map showing the location and service areas of these systems. The two newest transit systems, Asotin County Transit and Columbia County Public Transportation, did not have reportable data for 2004 and will be reporting in the 2005 report. Also not included in this report are Washington State Ferries and the many non-profit and for-profit public transportation providers across the state.

## **New Database Has Streamlined Reporting and Analysis**

In 2003, WSDOT began collecting transit system data electronically and downloading the information into a database. The change has improved the accuracy of the data and simplified the preparation of this data-intensive report. In addition, the change makes the data more useful by storing information in an organized format so the data can be easily retrieved and used for transit development plans.

## **Organization of the Summary**

This year's summary is organized in three sections and five appendixes.

### ***Highlights***

This section briefly describes significant developments for public transportation in Washington State during 2004 and 2005. A broad range of public transportation programs and issues are summarized.

## ***Statewide Operations Overview***

This section presents a statewide picture of transit performance:

- Fixed route ridership increased 4.42 percent over 2003.
- Demand response ridership increased 6.49 percent over 2003.
- Vanpool ridership increased 3.44 percent over 2003.
- Service miles increased for all bus, light rail, and commuter services.
- Local tax revenues increased 5.94 percent.
- Service costs increased 6.92 percent.

The statewide operations overview also shows transit's performance against a set of benchmark measures created in 2002.

## ***Operating Characteristics for Each System***

The bulk of the report is devoted to profiles of each transit system's operating characteristics, services, and achievements for 2004, accompanied by its objectives for 2005 and plans through 2010. The profiles are divided into three sections according to the size of the transit system and then organized alphabetically.

### **Systems Serving Urbanized Areas**

- C-TRAN
- Community Transit
- Everett Transit
- King County Metro Transit
- Pierce Transit
- Sound Transit
- Spokane Transit Authority

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<sup>1</sup>The annual summary of public transportation is required by Section 35.58.2796 RCW.

### Systems Serving Small City Areas

- Ben Franklin Transit
- Cowlitz Transit Authority d.b.a. CUBS
- Intercity Transit
- Kitsap Transit
- Link Transit\*
- Skagit Transit\*
- Whatcom Transportation Authority
- Yakima Transit

### Systems Serving Rural Areas

- Clallam Transit System
- Garfield County Public Transportation
- Grant Transit Authority
- Grays Harbor Transportation Authority
- Island Transit
- Jefferson Transit Authority
- Mason County Transportation Authority
- Pacific Transit
- Pullman Transit
- Twin Transit
- Valley Transit

### Appendixes

The appendixes include:

- glossary of terms related to public transportation,
- list of projects funded through WSDOT's public transportation grants program,
- statewide statistical summaries of operating and financial characteristics.

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\*The 2000 U.S. Census Bureau reclassified the Mount Vernon-Burlington and Wenatchee-East Wenatchee areas as small urbanized areas. As such, Skagit Transit and Link Transit were moved from the "Systems Serving Rural Areas" to the "Systems Serving Small City Areas" section starting with the 2003 report.

### Public Transportation Funding and Ridership Are on an Upswing in Our State

Public transportation in Washington plays an increasingly vital and well-supported role in the state's transportation system. The legislature approved significant new funding for transportation and many communities have stepped up with local dollars to close gaps in funding since the passage of Initiative 695 in 1999. Consensus is building around the idea that our state must use a broad range of strategies to meet our growing travel demand. The information contained in this 2004 report suggests that to a great extent this shift in understanding has already taken place.

Public transportation provides access for people to get to work, school, medical appointments, and other everyday activities. After two years of declining ridership primarily due to service cuts, public transportation ridership began to rise in 2003, and continued to grow in 2004. In 2004, Washington residents took over 170 million total trips using public transportation—a 4.82 percent increase over 2003.

Based on the transit system profiles in this report, transit services have improved in much of the state. Transit agencies have increased levels of service and developed many new products and services to meet the diverse needs of their riders. Sound Transit started operating light rail service in Tacoma, extended commuter rail north to Everett, and continued major construction of the Link Light Rail System. Other transit systems are offering more options for commuting and have enthusiastically engaged in the Vanpool Investment Program by committing local resources to expand their programs. More and better information is available online and by phone about transit, ferry, and train schedules and the traveling conditions of important routes.

In addition, major projects underway are improving commuter and intercity rail, developing light rail, and extending the HOV system. The completion of these projects will greatly enhance the effectiveness and attractiveness of public transportation. Milestones reached in the public transportation industry are highlighted in the next chapter of this report.

# Washington State Public Transportation Transit Authorities



